

Notes from the CDS CC Ends Report Panel Discussion (May 19, 2010)

Attendees:

- **Tim Bartlett** – Lexington Co-op, Buffalo, NY
- **Kari Bradley** – Hunger Mountain, Montpelier, VT
- **Glenn Bergman** – Weavers Way, Philadelphia, PA
- **Clem Nilan** – Onion River / City Market, Burlington, VT
- **Lori Burge** – People's Food Co-op, Portland, OR

Format

We'll ask a series of questions, listed below, and do a go around for each question. The total length of the session is 1 hour. The discussion questions are specifically geared towards the process rather than the specifics of the report.

Questions

1. **Who is involved in creating your Ends report, and how is your Ends reporting integrated into your operations and management/staff?**

Tim: Pam Mehnert on the outside (Outpost Natural Foods), our finance manager, merchandising manager, scan coordinator (to track the data). . . It becomes one of the measurements that we track & gives us the ability to focus on improving in a certain area.

Kari: I write the report. Data is supplied by different managers: IT, Marketing, etc.; those members of the senior management team... those involved in multi-year planning. It is very integrated... Just getting familiar with the metrics

Glenn: HR, finance, purchasing, marketing/editor of newsletter (keeps track of material that goes out to public), outreach (# of new members, etc). We ask for input from community members, volunteer work.

Clem: I'm responsible for writing the report. Try to keep the report more "board matter" related. Set up data to match... bottoms up approach for business planning.... When putting together the plans you need to separate out operational plans from the board/business plan. I look for holism between op plan and plan inspired by the board - The Annual Report becomes a summary of Ends.

Lori: we started in 2007. Committee worked on the Ends interpretations. Committees developed focus areas. Top level strategic plan/ department managers and top level managers gather the data. I assemble the report – this flows into the Annual Report.

2. When is the Ends report worked on during the year? (Here we mean not just the creation of the report itself, but any time the Ends report, Ends interpretations, measurements, and data collection are part of the management conversation.)

Tim:

- Usually I begin reworking the interpretations a month before it is due.
- Data collection happens all year long on some things – and is a push to gather it before the deadline in others.
- Start on report a month or two before.... A lot of measurements are new items.

Kari: we're gathering data throughout the year. July/Aug are the main times to compile data, than report out to staff, annual report, etc, wrap up process. Moving back to our business plan, we have a management retreat in Jan to remind everyone about Ends, Ends Interps, Goals, refresh 3-year goals, get input from board, members and customers... planning for several months of the year in addition to time on reporting out.

Glenn: Due in Dec... start in Sept to get people together to make sure people know what data will be needed, and to be sure that everyone knows what will be needed.

Clem: Due in June (fiscal year ends June 30) Looking ahead and back at the same time. Data collection is ongoing, files and folders re outreach, etc. Need to make sure interpretations and objectives are what you want them to be.

Lori: data collection is year round. Strategic planning, 3 month period. Report due late Feb, Annual report in July... so info flows into the annual report and meeting. We have a meeting May-June to make sure everyone is on target, in particular if new data is to be collected.

3. Have you had your Ends change and how has that affected your data collecting?

Lori: First we set out our interpretations with the understanding that some data flow will start in later years

Clem: Ends changed 3 years ago... presents a puzzle re data set required. Just a struggle...that's it. You should ask, "What facts will support the new policy?"

4. Is looking at 1 yr ahead and then 5 yrs ahead in ends reporting the standard most of you use? When you are looking at ends, are you generally thinking 5 years out?

Kari: 3 year plan

Tim: seems hard to think about 5 years... currently much shorter time scope. 3 months

Lori: 1 and 5 years out... found it a tremendous relief to look farther out.

5. Please describe any "breakthrough" moments you've had while working on Ends reporting that helped shape the development of your report.

Kari: Three things –

1) a set of metrics (came up with 25-30) that ended up being a reasonable interpretation... last report was a pleasure to write because we came up with a set of relevant measurements... really demonstrates our connection...

2) in showing the trajectory of how we're doing on these... looking back 3 years and forward 3 years, shows where we've been and where we're going.

3) providing economic, social and environs... economic came up with all ways of how the co-op can use its resources and profits... profitability, net assets, refunds, livable wage... all these things we can make progress on... looking for a balance over time.

Glenn: started a non-profit a couple years ago, the NP is the one that is fulfilling part of our Ends and should be included in our report. !

Clem: Seward co-op did a presentation on their annual report... comic book style/snappy graphics, all the good that the co-op had done in a form that members would find accessible. Made a connection to the Annual Report. Data points are good, but also included the story, especially on food systems

Lori: Getting the history, a couple years of data. Graphs of data. Timing of reports so information is available when needed.

Tim:

- Stealing Pam's was a real breakthrough for me. It made me see that I could use a large number of measurements and approach the problem from many angles. I was more used to limitations reporting where you are trying to prove compliance with one measurement beyond a shadow of a doubt. With Ends – it is more that there is a big audacious goal, and we don't expect to hit it any time soon, and so we use many different measures to track our progress.
- Looking forward to forward looking info in the graphs!

6. What are future priorities/challenges/problems related to Ends reporting or connecting your Ends accomplishment to your planning process that you have marked for future development?

Kari: we still have some interpretations that are unresolved, not sure how to measure a few, don't know where to begin; we're keeping the management team and staff thinking about these... we all can relate to financial issues, sales and net income for example, but must also drive home the point regarding the other goals. We're just getting going on that - multi-year projections of non-financial goals.

Glenn: interpretations on how to work on the "diversity" part; we continue to get data for local products, digging down and finding the info.

Clem: in the planning process coming up with the interpretations is key, nice to have 3rd party verifications, if possible. For example, a social goal... how do you tie donation requests into Ends reporting? Had Campaign to End Childhood Hunger give input on our approach, gave us ideas that informed the planning and report of goals. It's a good idea to reach out to someone who might know more than you.

Lori: improve interpretations and keep them alive. Revisit them every couple years. How to keep staff understanding the interpretations? Interpretations are what we need to be aligned behind to have effective strategies and benchmarks... keep people connected. Gathering more data. Getting more comparisons from other co-ops. Simplify - 3-5 top objectives/priorities figured out. What will make goals accomplishable... keeping goals realistic and worth striving for.

Tim:

- Continue to integrate it into our cycle of improvement (plan, do, review). Continue to shape our organization around Ends accomplishment by pushing it deeper into the departmental work plans and the measures that we track throughout the year.
- Refine interpretations, build databases, develop some of the surveys we need... it's a several year process to build it all...
- Continue to drive it down into the organization and have it help think about the org to the smallest of decisions that are being made.

7. How does your Ends report add value to the organization? Do you use the Ends report and related processes in ways other than providing it to your board?

Kari: staff newsletter... pluck out a nugget from Ends report and include it in the newsletter.. did you know xyz... Having data available can be really useful for outside organizations. Especially true with data related to "local" data.

Glenn: just had an expansion... have 30 new people. Plan is to give managers and staff the report or nuggets. A lot are new, so the report will be useful for staff training to help share our long term direction.

Clem: creating a mindfulness in the organization... helps everyone think along the same lines.

Lori: Quarterly check in on top five annual priorities...use the report data and benchmarks to see if we're on track. "Everyone thinking about the Ends." Coming innovation: Measure how much local, co-op and fair trade products... this will help consumers/community connect to the data/actions.

Tim:

- It gives us a lot of data that we didn't used to have – and what we measure shapes our organization.
- It gives us a large number of exciting measurements to show to our owners in our Annual report.
- Share info with staff